



Ellington Public Schools

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Raised Bill No. 1094 AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF READING MODELS OR PROGRAMS

February 28, 2023

Senator Douglas McCrory
Representative Jeffrey Currey
Members of the Education Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3100 Hartford, CT 06106

To: Senator Douglas McCrory, Representative Jeffrey Currey, and honorable members of the Education Committee:

I am writing **in support** of Raised Bill No. 1094 AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF READING MODELS OR PROGRAMS with **recommendations for expanding the Bill** to more effectively support districts in ensuring the success of **all students** in their development of critical reading skills.

The bill effectively provides more time for districts to plan for implementation of important improvements in reading instruction. There is no doubt that research in how children learn to read has clarified the need for explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, rapid automatic name/letter fluency, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. The research supports specific sequences of instruction and skill development. Ellington, like many districts, has been adjusting the literacy block, curriculum, and curricular resources in response to student needs, research, and best practices.

As a result, student proficiency in reading on SBAC in grades three and four has improved over the last several years in Ellington, putting the district in the top twenty percent of Connecticut districts in the most recent assessment. The State Department of Education set specific assessments for grades K-3 and asked districts to report on the percent of students substantially deficient in reading as part of a process to request a waiver from implementing their chosen comprehensive commercial reading programs. Disaggregating the data shows that, in 2019, 91% of our students of color were NOT substantially deficient in reading and 91% of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch were NOT substantially deficient in reading. In 2022, after the disruptions of the pandemic, the rates were 87% and 98%, respectively. Despite our success we agree with the state's assessment that we can do even better through strategic review of curriculum, instructional practices, adding and adjusting curricular resources, and additional professional learning for teachers and administrators.

Based on the demonstrated success of our model, and the success of many other districts, in educating students of all backgrounds, we urge the legislature to consider the following adjustments to the Bill:

- Eliminate the required purchase of identified scripted reading packages,

- Create a model state curriculum for reading for grades K-3,
- Provide training in the Science of Reading and best practices for teachers and administrators, and,
- Provide time and tools for districts to further assess their curricula and resources, assess the value of specific comprehensive programs and more targeted program components, and train teachers for more effective implementation.

Sincerely,



Oliver Barton

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